

Crackdown Snares Violators

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HARTFORD & NEIGHBORS -- Anyone who thought Hartford's Safe Streets Initiative to crack down on reckless drivers was a publicity stunt should look carefully at what has happened in the two weeks since Mayor Eddie Perez launched the drive.

A remarkable 2,227 traffic-enforcement actions were recorded during that time, many more than any similar period in memory. Consider that the city averages 735 motor vehicle violations per month.

The collaborative effort between Hartford and the neighboring towns of West Hartford, Bloomfield and Wethersfield included the issuance of 1,245 tickets for motor vehicle infractions such as speeding and improper lane change.

Another 105 individuals received summonses to appear in court for more serious violations, including reckless driving and driving an unregistered vehicle.

More significantly, police confiscated a record 77 vehicles. Many of those vehicles either were found unsafe to operate or were being driven by people wanted on outstanding criminal warrants. In some cases, police arrested the drivers after finding narcotics and illegal firearms in their cars.

Anecdotally, authorities note, police report fewer accidents have occurred as a result of the crackdown and a noticeable slowing down of traffic along the major commuter routes leading in and out of the city. If so, the crackdown will have achieved its ultimate goal, which is to improve the quality of life in the city.

State police and agents from the state Department of Motor Vehicles also participated in the crackdown, which officials expect to continue until Jan. 1.

If only a way could be found to extend the Safe Streets Initiative year-round. Hartford could use it. According to the Washington, D.C.-based Surface Transportation Policy Project, Greater Hartford is the nation's 29th most dangerous metro area for pedestrians.